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REMARKS

The non-final Office Action dated March 30, 2007 was reviewed. Claims 1, 2, 4, and 5 are pending with claim 1 being in independent form.

Applicants appreciate the Examiner's finding that the previous rejections have been overcome, and appreciate the Examiner's designation of the outstanding Office Action as non-final.

Applicants have carefully reviewed the Office Action and the applied prior art, and respectfully traverse the new rejections, on the basis that the claimed masking member uses a differently made material that has importantly different properties.

Applicants disclose a masking member that has a complex three-dimensional, rather than flat, shape *See* Figs. 1-19 of application.

The masking member is made by vacuum and/or pressure forming of modified polypropylene in which are mixed 5-30wt% polyethylene and/or ethylene-propylene copolymer. *See* published application (Publ. No. 2006/0057411 A1) at [0005].

Applicants further disclose that for this type of masking member, going below the 5-30wt% range specified in the claims causes moldability to be insufficiently improved thus making it difficult to mold the requisite masking member, while going above the 5-30wt% range causes the resulting material to have poor hardness such that its shape and dimensional stability and heat resistance degrade. Published application at [0008] and [0039].

The principal reference, WO99/14281 ("Hennen"), as understood, is directed not to a masking member with complex shape made of a material that has good moldability as well as good hardness and dimensional stability, but to "a release liner for pressure sensitive adhesive articles such as single- and double-sided tapes, films, labels, and the like." *See* Hennen at page 3, lines 19-20. Hennen refers to a material with relative proportions of thermoplastic to rubbery material that can range from 85wt%/15wt% to 15wt%/85wt%, and preferably from

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70wt%/30wt% to 30wt%/70wt%, and more preferably from 60wt%/40wt% to 40wt%/60wt%. See Hennen at page 5, lines 8-23. However, Hennen makes clear that the release lines is film-like that adheres to a support that provides any needed dimensional stability rather than a complex shape that is self-supporting molded masking member that has good hardness and dimensional stability. Hennen, page 5, lines 23-26, states as follows:

The preferred ranges of thermoplastic to rubbery material are particularly suitable for liners used to protect pressure-sensitive adhesive tapes on TEO substrates such as those used in many current automotive body side moldings.

The release lines proposed in Hennen is formed not by molding that can create a masking member of complex shape but by processes appropriate for films that do not need to be self supporting. Hennen, page 6, lines 13-15, states as follows:

The release liner of the invention can be made by processes that are commercially known, and available. These processes include blown film extrusion or co-extrusion for films having multiple layers and sheet extrusion or co-extrusion.

Applicants submit that a person of ordinary skill in the art seeking a composition that provides for excellent moldability and dimensional stability for a molded masking member of complex shape would not seek direction from Hennen's proposal of a material that has different properties suited to a different purpose. Such a person of ordinary skill in the art would have been surprised to discover that a 5-30 range that partly overlaps with a 15-85 range in Hennen produces such unexpected results of moldability and self supporting dimensional stability for molded masking members, particularly when it turns out that the much greater portion of the Hennen range, 30-85, is inoperative for the such a molded masking member.

The secondary reference, JP 05154423A ("Nagoya"), is cited with respect to

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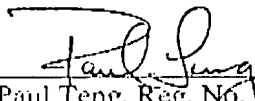
dependent claims 2 and 5 for a teaching that a filler added to a base layer. However, Nagoya does not disclose the composition of a masking member specified in independent claim 1 of this application. In light of the discussion above of Hennen, applicants submit that a person of ordinary skill in the art would not have considered a combination of Hennen and Nagoya in seeking the properties for a masking member claimed in this patent application.

Accordingly, applicants submit that this application claims a masking member that is not made obvious by the applied prior art, and respectfully request allowance.

If a petition for an extension of time is required to make this response timely, this paper should be considered to be such a petition. The Patent Office is hereby authorized to charge any fees that are required in connection with this amendment and to credit any overpayment to our Deposit Account No. 03-3125.

If a telephone interview could advance the prosecution of this application, the Examiner is respectfully requested to call the undersigned attorney.

Respectfully submitted,


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